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ABSTRACT

Eight issues affecting the ability of the schools to meet the public's expectations and concerns are explored in this address. It examines problems, proposed solutions, barriers to change, and possibilities for reform in each of the eight areas. The topics considered are (1) school organization, the need for flexible structuring, and enhancement of the administrator's role as instructional leader; (2) improving educational programs and instructional practices; (3) improving the school-community relationship; (4) management of administrative and learning time; (5) increasing the effectiveness of educational personnel through raised standards, added training, and improved evaluation; (6) accountability and program evaluation; (7) modifications in reward systems for educators; and (8) increased cooperation among local educators, state departments of education, and colleges of education to improve teacher and administrator training and recruitment. The paper concludes with a summary of the barriers that limit change in all areas and a brief analysis of the major factors affecting the success of educational reform. (PGD)

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SCHOOL REFORM IN THE EIGHTIES

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In March of 1983 I received a phone call from Bob McElrath, Commissioner of Education for the State of Tennessee. He wanted to know if I would help with an educational program that Governor Lamar Alexander had proposed to the state Legislature. With that simple request, the focus of my academic world changed. I became a member of a an educational team whose responsibility it was to develop and implement programs that would change the way educators and citizens in Tennessee would think about their schools.

Similar reform programs in other states are at various stages of development, depending on the insight of political leaders and the awareness of school systems and communities to their educational needs.

School reform in the eighties has become an important agenda item for teachers, administrators, boards of education, parents, and citizens. It is to that reform, to the barriers that inhibit the needed changes, to the proposed solutions proposed to the issues raised and how these solutions can be achieved that I would like to address my remarks today. *these remarks come as a result of a

review of the commissioned reports, discussion with legislators, experience as a firsthand observer of and participant in policy discussions, and frequent meetings with school administrators and teachers. They focus on issues basic to understanding and implementing school reform recommendations.

First, it is important to review and understand the context in which the reports and proposals have been made. Schools, in their historic role, have been called upon to educate and to socialize each succeeding generation of young Americans. The public schools have been responsible for providing the common experience that binds us, as a people, together. Education has been the vehicle for developing the reservoir of intellectual capital needed to advance science and technology and to solve the problems of society. It has been evident for some time that these functions have not been addressed to the satisfaction of the public.

Other traditional expectations for the schools such as providing students with basic skills and preparing them for college have been obscured as schools have adjusted to local concerns or accommodated the many demands of different educational authorities. Schools have had to contend with tax revolts, changing federal aid programs, race, sex and ethnic bias programs, collective bargaining, student discipline, declining enrollments, religious controversies, sex education, child abuse, drug abuse, and a host of other issues, each of which, has been a crisis of varying

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intensity and duration. Declining achievement test scores is one evidence of education's primary attention to these other matters.

Current expectations for schools reflect, in part, academic concerns and the need to see that students develop greater problem solving capacity. It is our society's way of developing and maintaining that reservoir of intellectual capital.

We need intelligent and socially responsible citizens to resolve the international problems related to human rights, economic development, defense, distribution of food supplies and international cooperation and understanding. Even with an immigration of talented and committed individuals from other countries, it is necessary to see that future generations are educated to fill the technical, service-oriented and managerial roles which are needed. Our national and international responsibilities require that of us.

The decline of student enrollment in foreign languages and the humanities and the absence of serious study of the culture and religions of people in other countries or areas such as Latin America, the Soviet Union, China, India, the African nations and the Middle East have potentially very serious consequences for this country. These countries are now impacting, through trade relationships and financial obligations, the economic, political and social decisions made in the United States. We are not prepared, however,

either in our thinking or our skills to relate to them with understanding.

Further, the development of an individual's full intellectual capacity, not just providing him or her with a few isolated skills, is of paramount importance. We have a responsibility to society as well as to the individual. We cannot ignore our broader national and international responsibilities nor our responsibility to the individual by educating students unmindful of the context in which that education takes place. Such a course of action would, in my judgment, be professionally irresponsible and politically unwise. The development of educational activities, or tasks with purposes greater than self-enhancement gives meaning to our educational effort.

A few years ago, Donald Kennedy, president of Stanford University, in addressing the class of 1977 suggested that the graduates should give careful consideration to participating in roles of public service. They had, he suggested, a social responsibility that transcended their own private goals. I concurred then, and do now, with that point of view. The thrust of many of the recommendations of the educational reform reports has to do with specific objectives but relate to broad social purposes.

FIRST ISSUE

The first basic issue I want to address is that of the organization and structure of schools. Governor Lamar Alexander has repeated on numerous occasions that the

problems in Tennessee schools and, I would add, in the United States, are not teacher created. Rather, they are the result of policies and practices of those who organize and manage the schools. The purpose of organizing a school is to facilitate the achievement of its goals. School goals may range from maximizing the full development of a student's ability with the school organized accordingly, to maintaining the school structure itself at the cost of student learning. The structure of a school reveals the assumptions which have been made about school goals and how best to achieve them. The variables which must be considered include teachers, students, learning space, content to be learned, teaching materials needed, time available, and support services. School structures traditionally have established permanent or fixed relationships among these variables by assigning a group of students to a teacher in a classroom for one school year. Such an arrangement limits the opportunity for learning and minimizes the role of the administrator in the learning process. He or she is left with minimum coordinating functions, and with responsibility occasionally to monitor classroom instruction. In other words, he or she is left with managerial responsibilities for non-instructional functions. This is the basis for the view that school principals are not and can not be instructional leaders. Such a school structure increases the isolation of teachers and reduces the principal's involvement in instructional

activities. It also provides a rationale for why non-instructional activities in schools have taken on so much prominence, especially at the upper grade levels. After all, the "action" is going to be where the school leader is, whether that is instructional or non-instructional.

If schools are to concentrate on instructional goals and student achievement, then the findings of effective schools research and recent national studies seem appropriate for suggesting school structural changes. The goal is to involve teachers in administrative and educational decision making of the school and to involve principal's more in instructional decision making. Such a commitment would result in more organizational decision making groups within a school such as at grade levels, within and across subject areas, and by types of student problems. It would require greater involvement and coordination by the principal in instructional programming and would make learning and instruction the center of attention.

The use of micro-computers and other electronic data processing equipment in retrieving, storing and disseminating information needed by the faculty can eliminate many of the very routine tasks of principals. Such tasks do not require advanced graduate training or an M.A. or Ed.D. degree. Principal aids could be assigned many of the non-instructional routine duties principals now have.

The purpose here is to find ways of maintaining organizational control, order and neatness with less effort; to develop functional arrangements for improving organizational flexibility and coordination; and to increase the quality of teaching and learning. Greater structural flexibility in schools is essential if programs are to be adjusted to student learning and achievement, and the quality of teaching is to be improved.

SECOND ISSUE

The second basic issue relates to improving educational programs and instructional practices. It really is a continuation of the organization and structure theme stated in the first basic issue. The various reports on educational reform have addressed issues such as the need for a common core of knowledge, an increase in the number of required courses, a closer relationship between elementary and secondary curricula, and the need for course content to address the development of higher order cognitive skills. Other more specific concerns relate to the sequencing of mathematics content, and the inclusion of more science, foreign language and social studies in the curriculum.

Questions about instructional practices relate to the use of didactic instruction, supervised student practice, active participation of students in the learning process, the diagnosis of student learning problems, the use of classroom time, feedback to students, student mastery of

content and determining appropriate indicators of academic achievement.

The ultimate purpose, of course, is to produce that, sometimes elusive, quality known as excellence. I particularly like the Definition of excellence provided by William Spady and Gary Marx of AASA in the publication Excellence in our schools: Making it Happen. They state, "Excellence occurs when the instructional system is able to provide the individual learner with an appropriate level of challenge and a realistic opportunity to succeed on a frequent and continual basis for each instructional goal in the program." (P.8) John Gardner suggests that excellence can be measured by a comparison between people or comparing a person at his/her worst against his/her best. The increasing attention to criterion referenced tests suggests excellence is going to be defined as a level of achievement on a fixed standard based on some value judgment.

Educational reform is possible but only in the context of changing those policies and practices over which one has control. Teachers teach in classrooms under the control of principals and supervisors. Teachers in isolation do not have control over PA announcements, the length of class periods, the teaching schedule, the curriculum to be taught, the resources available, nor the students to be instructed. They do, however, control classroom management, instructional techniques and the learning process.

Consequently, teachers can be held accountable for improvements in these areas.

Principals administer schools under the direction of superintendents and boards of education. Principals, however, have less control over practices such as age-grading, required courses, textbook selection, grade level organization of their school or course placement. But they do, however, set the tone for the school, help determine its instructional objectives and provide the educational leadership that makes the difference. For these things they can be held accountable.

Making fundamental changes in educational programs and instructional practices on a given timetable and with great specificity is a task of awesome proportions when directed by centralized policy makers. While the weakest part of the reform reports relates to implementation, it is the implementation that will determine the success of the reforms. The lack of attention to how educational reform will be implemented and supported at the local level is a critical deficiency and poses the most serious threat to sustained educational reform. Here the ability of local educators will be most sorely tested.

Local schools, although often cast in the role of villain, must be helped to understand the suggested changes and then be trusted to implement them. Understanding and developing this partnership is critical to the success of educational reform. Hopefully, all governors, legislators and top

educational policy makers will not lose sight of this, as we enter the second stage of reform.

At the heart of all major curriculum and instructional changes proposed by whomever, are questions of values, attitudes, competencies and vested interests. Local change efforts must consider these factors as a part of the problem and must deal with them. Making these changes in an effective manner and keeping the casualty rate low is a function of time used, consideration shown to the people involved and the commitment to effect change.

THIRD ISSUE

The third basic issue I wish to address is that of improving school-community partnerships. There currently exists in most communities an unwillingness to increase the financial support for schools and school programs. There are less parents in each community whose children are enrolled in the public schools than there are non-parents, senior citizens and non-public school parents. This is due in part to the presence of unmarried persons, an aging population, a declining birth rate, and enrollment of students in non-public schools. We have known for a long time that the strongest supporters of schools came from parents whose children were enrolled in the public schools. Public school parents no longer are the majority of citizens in a community.

As the proportion of public school parents in a community has decreased, the source of local funding for

schools has diminished. Schools have not been able to assume that the public will support its programs. Further, the most recent Gallop Poll of Teachers' Attitudes Toward the Public schools (PDK, January, 1985) revealed, there is considerable disagreement between teachers and the public about issues related to the schools. The poll revealed that teachers and the public disagreed on two-thirds of the issues. Such disagreement does not build community support. As the Hart Poll showed in Tennessee, citizens were not willing to spend more money on education unless schools did some things differently. They were, however, willing to spend more money on schools if changes were made and schools did a better job of educating their children. That point of view has been echoed in many different ways across this nation. It is reflected in the increased enrollment in private and other non-public schools. Perhaps it is best expressed in those states where financial support has accompanied significant changes in school governance, curriculum revisions, revisions in how to pay teachers, and increased expectations were increased for students and the professional staff. I refer to states such as Texas, California, Florida and Tennessee along with 20 plus other states. It is also reflected in the efforts of parents to have the right to teach their children at home. Today, before the legislature in Tennessee there is a bill, which if passed would make it possible for parents with a high school education to teach their children at home up through

the eighth grade and for parents with a college education to teach their children at home through high school.

Efforts to secure the active involvement of parents, senior citizens, business and community leaders in school program development and implementation should be undertaken. Such programs would strengthen school-community ties, thereby, improving the support base of schools. The programs would bridge the traditional boundaries schools have maintained. They would also suggest new roles for administrators and how they organize and manage their schools. They would require a more effective communication network and better agreement on the purpose of schools and how they should function. Typical of such efforts to promote parental involvement in local school system decision making is that established by the Tennessee state Board of Education at its meeting of February 22, 1985 related to a family life optional program. In the Board's resolution, school systems in Tennessee were given the option of including a family life unit in their health curriculum. The implementation of such a program, however, will require that local school systems conduct hearings so that people in the community will have an opportunity to be involved in the development and implementation of such a program. The formation of community advisory groups to local boards of education is another step towards getting citizens involved in their schools. It is this kind of recognition of mutual responsibility of school and community that will eventually

bring about effective educational programs and improve community support for schools.

FOURTH ISSUE

The fourth basic issue which I would like to address relates to the use of time. Because numerous proposals have been made to lengthen the school day, lengthen the school year and/or make more effective use of the time available to us, I believe the use of time is worth discussing as a major factor in educational reform efforts. Of all the resources available to school personnel, the amount of time is the one over which teachers and principals which have little control. They can use or misuse it, but they can not increase it or decrease it. Some teachers and principals jealously guard the use of time by carefully preparing for how to use the instructional time available to them. Others waste it in purposeless activity and have no regrets. Most of us feel a need to better organize our time and end up believing we should have gotten more done in the time available.

One of the most popular seminar topics of the National Academy of School executives has to do with time management. These seminars have helped administrators realize that most of us waste more time than we realize and that most of us have difficulty in establishing priorities for the use of time. The purpose of the seminars is to help participants discover how to maximize their productivity in the time available. Also, techniques for avoiding time wasters are

reviewed. A key concern relates to the added responsibilities teachers and administrators feel when introducing educational change. How will they have time to meet all of the new expectations as well as fulfill all of their present responsibilities. Before offering a brief answer to this "Timely" question, let me say that in Japan they have increased the amount of time available for instructional purposes. About 600-700 more hours a year. A pattern followed by some of us attempting to bring about educational changes is to spend more of the time available to us each week on work related activities. There is still another way of using time. That is to use time saving devices to decrease the time spent in completing a given task, thus allowing more free time or time for additional tasks.

A combination of these approaches is needed if we are to become effective users of time and effective in accomplishing our goal of bringing about educational reform.

We must become more adept in determining activities on which we should not waste our time, in delegating functions that others can perform equally well or satisfactorily, and in establishing priorities in how we use our time for those things we must do. Reinventing the wheel is an old adage related to the waste of time. Time is sacred, it is money, it is a precious commodity and should be used thoughtfully and efficiently.

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The phrase "Time on Task" has come to symbolize the importance of using every moment of class time in a productive way. Harry Wong has helped many of us think more seriously about ways of managing class time more efficiently. Jane Stallings has shocked us with her research showing that a minimum of class time is actually used for instructional purposes. House Bill 246 in Texas symbolically gets at the root of the matter with its mandate that PA announcements can only be made once a day before or after school. It is strange that it should take a legislature to tell us educators that we should protect instructional time. It is the unusual school, however, where instructional time is sacred and where classes are not interrupted for administrative announcements or non-instructional purposes.

Over time, we have communicated to students and to parents that the most important activity in a school is not the instructional program. Simply refusing to allow the PA system to be used other than at a designated time before or after a school day might contribute significantly to the learning process. Administrators do have control over most of the class interruptions and should begin to protect instructional time. Further, the selection of instructional technologies that are time efficient for the learnings to be achieved is an important task for both principals and classroom teachers. Implementation of the educational reforms depends on the use of such time savers.

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FIFTH ISSUE

The fifth basic issue which I wish to address is that of improving the capability of educational personnel. For years, teachers, administrators and school boards have assumed that having teachers and administrators attend college classes and securing advanced degrees was the road to improved instruction and student learning in the public schools. It may be. However, the linkage is not strong and the deficiencies noted by the several commissioned reports have added to the doubts generated by the effective schools research. Also, the suspicion is present that enrollment in college classes has been more self serving for educators in terms of salary increases and for colleges in terms of enrollment than beneficial to the public schools. This is not to say that benefits did not accrue to the public schools, but a skeptical public wishes to establish a more direct linkage between dollars spent and services rendered.

The public is demanding more evidence of professional competence. At the same time evidence has accumulated that not all classroom instructional practices are equally effective. There is a body of knowledge emerging which suggests that sound classroom management, careful planning, the use of selected instructional technologies and appropriate evaluation techniques will produce better learning. Also, establishing supportive administrative, practices related to the formation of school goals and objectives that have high performance expectations, working

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with teachers on instructional matters, establishing a positive school climate, and establishing effective communication practices is critical to this goal. There are a number of factors which need to be addressed in any serious effort to improve the capability of school personnel. Issues range from identifying competencies needed to providing the programs necessary for acquiring these competencies. Key concepts relate to pre-service preparative programs communication, faculty involvement, participatory decision making, flexibility, the development of trusting relationships, and program evaluation. I will comment on a few of these issues.

We need to improve communication among and between staff members, administrators, parents, students and other school patrons to develop trusting relationships which are supportive of professional growth. All that we know about growth and development tells us that communication is at the heart of effective learning. This is as true for teachers and administrators as it is for our students.

Administrators need to facilitate through various arrangements the opportunity for more professional interaction among teachers. The isolation of teachers must be eliminated. The exchange of information and the testing of ideas with each other is crucial but the process must begin during the teacher's college preparation.

Teacher training institutions need to give careful consideration to training students in higher order problem

solving activities if, as teachers, they are to help students acquire these skills. Teachers and principals need to be prepared to make group decisions. There must be more thoughtful give and take among those people who have chosen to become educators. The consequence of unexamined instructional behavior is a poorer quality of instruction and inhibits change and educational improvement.

It is not enough to give a prospective teacher or administrator a credential and/or an endorsement upon completion of his/her preparation program; the individual's performance must be regularly monitored for purposes of maintaining and renewing his/her capabilities.

We have had staff development programs for years. Teachers and administrators have been regular participants. I personally have been involved in hundreds of such programs and have always thought I made a significant contribution. Increasingly, however, I am of the opinion that staff development needs to be tied to personnel and/or program evaluation. Only in this way will we have established linkage between goals and objectives and expected outcomes. Staff development can thus be used to correct deficiencies or to strengthen current abilities. It is not enough that one does well what one does, but rather that one does well that which is appropriate and has purpose and meaning. A major thrust of the educational reforms taking place is to provide a more coherent sense of purpose and meaning to our educational efforts.

SIXTH ISSUE

The sixth basic issue I have selected for discussion is the importance of accountability. My previous remarks have alluded to the connection between evaluation and performance. It has become evident that accountability has been emerging for some time as a key concern of people both in and out of education. The theme of accountability is reflected in statements about establishing standards against which student teachers and administrators may be judged. Increasingly, efforts are being made to hold communities and parents accountable for their contribution or lack of it to the improvement of education. The development of tests and testing systems to measure student progress on a regular basis as well as the development of professional skills tests both at the pre-professional level and for use during a teacher's or administrator's career is another indication of this theme. Testing activity is at an all time high and will be used to establish base line data not now available.

Performance standards vary for professional educators from state to state but are being used in connection with career ladder and incentive pay systems. The linkage with accountability is clear. Finally, the publishing of student achievement scores by class and/or by school with increasing emphasis on using criterion referenced tests is an obvious attempt at accountability.

For a long time, we in education have believed that our goals were diffuse and our achievements not measurable. For

the most part, we also have had a monopoly on our clientele. That is all rapidly changing. Students and their parents increasingly are exercising their options to enroll in private schools, or go to other public schools of their choice, or to learn at home. The proposed use of educational vouchers is alive and public support may be growing. To further complicate matters, citizens have become very tax conscious and resist our requests for more money. When we have said, "Give us more money, and we will better educate your children," they have said, "When you improve the quality of education, we will consider giving you more money". Citizens are asking us to demonstrate accountability by delivering quality services consistent with their expectations. Undeniably, there is now a growing movement that teachers and administrators should be held accountable for student achievement. Parents are asking, "What did Johnny learn?" in addition to "How did you try to teach him?"

We have, over the last fifteen or so years, established some linkages between classroom instruction and student achievement. While there has been strong resistance within the profession to being accountable for student achievement, there is increased pressure by the general public and parents in particular to hold us accountable for what children have learned and how well they are able to apply the knowledge and skills learned to real world experiences.

Further, this demand for accountability has expanded to include the performance of administrators and supervisors as well as boards of education. In response to that demand, programs have been developed to objectively measure teacher and/or administrator and supervisory performance based on specific competencies. Such programs currently exist or are in the process of being developed in a majority of the states.

The luxury of buying the best educational talent available belongs only to the wealthier school districts and states. Parent expectations and educational needs are not confined to the wealthy states, however. Because of student needs, parental expectations and the scarcity of resources, some of the more comprehensive plans for reform have been generated in states with the fewest resources.

SEVENTH ISSUE

The seventh basic issue I wish to address has to do with modifying the reward system available to educational personnel. During the last thirty years, much attention has been given to providing teachers and school administrators with job security and uniform wages within a given school system. We have achieved the goals of financial and job security set for ourselves and our profession. We have not, however, established a clear relationship between across-the-board-pay schedules and student achievement. The general population does not believe that increased union activity or general salary increases leads to higher student

learning. Citizen demand is high that we devise salary systems that are linked to performance and achievement. To this end, a number of incentive pay systems or differentiated reward systems tied to evaluation programs have been and are being developed.

EIGHTH ISSUE

The last basic issue, I wish to address, has to do with the role of colleges of education. Although most of the attention to date has focused on K-12 public education, there is a need to give serious attention to the role of teacher education programs and to the preparation of principals and superintendents. Three major concerns relate to balancing degree and certification requirements in college program development, involving college faculty in public school activities and continuing to meet university expectations and securing able students as prospective teachers and administrators. Resolving problems related to these and other concerns will require closer cooperation among colleges of education, state departments, school systems, the various policy making boards, political leaders and legislative bodies to produce a more functional working relationship among these agencies and institutions. Each has a role to play. Given common goals of improving the learning environment, the quality of instruction, and student learning, self interests must give way to common planning efforts. Educational reform requires flexibility and a commitment of all the educational agencies involved.

including those institutions which provide the basic preparation programs. The development of joint planning efforts at the policy level, the exchange of personnel, and the regular development of joint programs are places to begin.

The eight basic issues I have addressed are, it seems to me, a synthesis of the major educational change efforts taking place in the United States. They constitute a conceptual agenda which outlines the task ahead of us. The reports of the various commissions and task forces outline in great detail the problems facing educators and parents in this country. They are quite specific in their recommendations as to what should be done to improve the existing situation. The implementation of the reports, however, depends on the willingness, commitment and capabilities of college and local school system personnel. Achieving the goals established by the commissioned reports will not be easy, and indeed may never take place in some school systems unless careful consideration is given to how the recommendations will affect local school policies, procedures, and the vested interests of persons now involved. There is already in place in the minds of many local educators agendas they would like to see implemented. They have as yet to argue for many of their own ideas, let alone those suggested in the various national reports.

I have identified many of the barriers to achieving EDUCATIONAL REFORM IN THE EIGHTIES. Let me restate some of the more significant ones that must be addressed:

- Apathy and inertia
- Lack of knowledge and understanding
- A lack of vision by persons in leadership positions
- A lack of goals and objectives related to instruction and learning
- Low expectations for students and teachers
- Rigid school and college structures and practices
- Outmoded certification requirements and procedures
- Resistance by teacher unions
- Lack of financial resources

Overcoming or circumventing these barriers will require considerable skill and commitment and several years of effort by citizens, educators, political leaders, parents, and students.

A number of down-to-earth, realistic vehicles for bringing about these changes are being tried in different states to address specific issues. Tennessee is one of the states that has developed a comprehensive change model that takes into account many of the concerns expressed by citizens in Tennessee, which, in turn, were confirmed by commission and task force reports and, at the same time, is

intended to overcome or bypass the barriers to change I have just enumerated. At least 25 other states are rapidly moving to achieve similar educational reform.

In summary, a few potentially long lasting educational reform patterns have emerged and should be noted.

Educational reform involves state level initiatives and cooperative local implementation. The changing pattern of educational control is closely parallel to the changing sources of financial support (e.g., from local property tax to state sales and income taxes). The resources to support the reform movement are, therefore, very dependent on the ability of Governors and Legislators to maintain public support which, in turn, rests on local ability to achieve educational improvement.

Curriculum reform is most pronounced when tied to well developed standards and criterion referenced testing programs.

Instructional reform is a function of college exit standards, teachers' and principals' selection criteria, competency development, and continuous performance evaluation on the job.

And, finally, improvement of student learning is a function of high expectations, effective instructional technology, adequate resources and professional commitment.

Thank You!